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Context-sensitive Argumentation: Dirty Tricks in the *Sophistical Refutations* and a Perceptive Medieval Interpretation of the Text

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Abstract
Aristotle in the central chapters of his *Sophistical Refutations* gives advice on how to counter unfair argumentation by similar means, all the while taking account not only of the adversary's arguments in themselves, but also of his philosophical commitments and state of mind, as well as the impression produced on the audience. This has offended commentators, and made most of them, medieval and modern alike, pass lightly over the relevant passages. A commentary that received the last touch in the very early 13th century is more perceptive because, it is argued, the commentator had lived in a 12th-century environment of competing Parisian schools that was in important respects similar to the one of Aristotle's Athens.

Keywords
dialectic, sophistics, audience school rivalry

1. Dirty Tricks and the Role of the Audience in Aristotelian Dialectic

In the rarified atmosphere of pure Aristotelian demonstration or didactics there is no need to worry about wily opponents, uncooperative respondents or incompetent audiences that might award the palms to the logically weaker participant in a discussion. Pure reason decides whether a demonstration is flawless or not, though pure reason may need to be embodied in the demonstrator's fellow-specialists in the relevant discipline.

We often pretend that we live in such an atmosphere, and just as mystics may reach union with the One a few times in their lives, we have occasional experiences of pure rationality, but—face it—most of the time we live in an environment that matters, even when we are occupied with the quest for truth.

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Aristotle's world was no different, and he did not forget the fact. Curious as he was about everything in human experience, he also observed how actual discussions were conducted in less-than-utopian settings, and penned down some thoughts about the matter. The result is what we know as the *Topics* and the *Sophistical Refutations*. The *Topics* is mainly about how to form a winning strategy in a discussion without really cheating, while keeping in mind that the one with whom you discuss might conveniently overlook some weak points in your argumentation.

The defining mark of dialectical arguments in Aristotle's sense is that they are supposed to use endoxic premises, i.e. such as are immediately plausible to most people, or at least have some claim to plausibility because they have the support of experts (*Topics* I.1.100b21-23). One important reason for this restriction on admissible premisses is that Aristotle thought of a dialectical disputation as one taking place in front of a public. This means there are three parties to the debate: the questioner, the answerer and the audience. In one important respect the situation is like that of forensic rhetoric: each of the two contesting parties must strive to persuade the audience that he is right. But there is a crucial difference: two forensic speakers in an ancient court of law did not really debate with each other, they spoke directly to the audience, while two disputants directly address each other and only indirectly the public. In *Topics* VIII.1.155b10 and 155b27 Aristotle stresses that the art of dialectic is essentially directed *to another* (πρὸς ἕτερον), and the 'other' here is clearly the other disputant, but, as we shall see, he also assumes the presence of a public (οἱ ἀκούοντες).

When talking about medieval theories of meaning we standardly distinguish between such as focus on the relationship between words and their contents and such as focus on the communication, by means of words, between a speaker and a listener. The relation between a forensic speaker and his audience is not fundamentally different from that of any speaker to his listener. The dialectical disputant is simultaneously trying to communicate with two types of listener, on whom his words may not have the same effect. He'd better have a good awareness of the context in which he is operating.

In the *Sophistical Refutations* we are taught how to both produce and demask arguments that cheat on the scales in one way or another, and similarly how to use and dissipate smoke-screens and similar devices whether we are in the questioner's or in the respondent's position. In the medieval West the work was sensibly divided into two books, book I on how to be an efficient, though ruthless, questioner, and book II (*SE* 16.175a2 sqq.) on how to demask or trick the trickster when one has the role of respondent.

Aristotle does not directly exhort us to argue sophistically, but as ancient and medieval commentators agreed, in order to be able to do the good works of a doctor you need to know about poisons as well as about medicines.[1] And if our antagonist uses counterfeit money, we are allowed to pay back with the same coin.

Through most of history the parts of the *Sophistical Refutations* that have received most attention are the chapters in book I on the thirteen ways of producing apparent refutations, the thirteen fallacies, and in book II about how to solve these fallacies. People have had no problems with finding those parts of the work interesting and useful. In recent times there has also been some interest in what the *Elenchi* can teach us about Aristotelian dialectic,[2] but there has been a tendency to neglect the chapters around the middle of the *Elenchi* in which Aristotle gives advice on how to trick your opponent in a disputation, whether you are the questioner or the answerer, and how to pay more attention to the probable reactions of the audience than to the objective merits of a piece of argumentation. As Aristotle says in one place:[3]

> Sometimes, we hold, one must produce a plausible deduction rather than a true one. Similarly, one must sometimes apply a plausible solution [to a sophism] rather than the true

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1) The comparison to doctors is at least as old as Philoponus. See *Ioannis Philoponi in Aristotelis Analytica Posteriora Commentaria*, ed. M. Wallies, Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 13.3 (Berlin 1909), 2. It is also found in Michael of Ephesus' commentary on *SE*; see *Alexandri quod fertur in Aristotelis Sophisticos Elenchos Commentarium*, ed. M. Wallies, Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 2.3 (Berlin 1898), 2. Via James of Venice's translations it reached the West in the 12th c.; see Sten Ebbesen, *Commentators and Commentaries on Aristotle's Sophistici Elenchi. A Study of Post-Aristotelian Ancient and Medieval Writings on Fallacies*, vols. I-III, Corpus Latinum Commentariorum in Aristotelem Graecorum VII.1-3 (Leiden, 1981) 2: 337, with comments in 3: 116-17.

2) E.g., J.D.G. Evans, *Aristotle's Concept of Dialectic* (Cambridge, 1977); Robert Bolton, 'The Epistemological Basis of Aristotelian Dialectic', in *Biologie, logique et métaphysique chez Aristote*, ed. Daniel Devereux and Pierre Pellegrin (Paris, 1990), 185-236; Oliver Primavesi, 'Dialektik und Gespräch bei Aristoteles', in *Der Dialog im Diskursfeld seiner Zeit. Von der Antike bis zur Aufklärung*, ed. Klaus Hempfer and Anita Traninger (Stuttgart, 2010), 47-73.

3) Arist., *SE* 17.175a31-36: Πρῶτον μὲν οὖν, ὥσπερ συλλογίζεσθαί φαμεν ἐνδόξως ποτὲ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀληθῶς προαιρεῖσθαι δεῖν, οὕτω καὶ λυτέον ποτὲ μᾶλλον ἐνδόξως ἢ κατὰ τἀληθές. ὅλως γὰρ πρὸς τοὺς ἐριστικοὺς μαχετέον οὐχ ὡς ἐλέγχοντας ἀλλ' ὡς φαινομένους· οὐ γάρ φαμεν συλλογίζεσθαί γε αὐτούς, ὥστε πρὸς τὸ μὴ δοκεῖν διορθωτέον. Reaffirmed at *SE* 17.176a19-23: Ὥσπερ οὖν εἴπομεν, ἐπειδήπερ οὐδ' ἔλεγχοί τινες ὄντες δοκοῦσιν εἶναι, κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον καὶ λύσεις δόξουσιν εἶναί τινες οὐκ οὖσαι λύσεις· ἃς δή φαμεν ἐνίοτε μᾶλλον δεῖν φέρειν ἢ τὰς ἀληθεῖς ἐν τοῖς ἀγωνιστικοῖς λόγοις καὶ τῇ πρὸς τὸ διττὸν ἀπαντήσει.

> one. In general, when fighting eristics we must keep in mind that we do not fight them because they are *refuting* us, since we hold that their deductions are flawed, but because they *appear* to be refuting us, so our attempts to set things right must aim at preventing them from *appearing* [to refute us].

Although not explicitly mentioned, the audience is present in this quotation. What Aristotle says indirectly is that the audience may not be able to appreciate a rigid lesson in what went wrong in our eristic opponent's argument, and our first job in the disputation is to prevent the audience from believing that we have been refuted.

On other occasions Aristotle directly refers to the audience and its probable beliefs and reactions,[4] but he also in the relevant chapters focuses on the advantage a disputant may take of knowledge about his opponent's commitments to particular beliefs or of knowledge about how he is likely to react in different situations.

2. A Perceptive Medieval Commentator

Just like modern scholars, our medieval colleagues tended to treat those parts of the *Elenchi* in a stepmotherly way. Late 13th-century question commentaries on the work do not touch on them at all, except that Radulphus Brito has a single question (II.2) *Utrum solutio apparens sit magis eligenda quam vera*. Unfortunately, in the two only mss of Brito's work, the text breaks off in the middle of the first *ratio quod non*.[5] Literal commentators from the last three quarters of the 13th century behave like their modern counterparts: they try as succinctly as possible to explain what Aristotle is advising without evincing any deep interest in the matter, offering neither longish digressions nor new examples. The same is true of Ockham.

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4) Arist., *SE* 1.165a15-17: "ἐπὶ τῶν λόγων οἱ τῶν ὀνομάτων τῆς δυνάμεως ἄπειροι παραλογίζονται καὶ αὐτοὶ διαλεγόμενοι καὶ ἄλλων ἀκούοντες." 8.169b30-32: "Ὅτι δ' ἔχομεν αὐτοὺς τῇ αὐτῇ μεθόδῳ, δῆλον· παρ' ὅσα γὰρ φαίνεται τοῖς ἀκούουσιν ὡς ἠρωτημένα συλλελογίσθαι, παρὰ τοσαῦτα κἂν τῷ ἀποκρινομένῳ δόξειεν." 15.174a35-36: "ἐνίοτε γὰρ καὶ αὐτοὶ οἴονται δεδωκέναι καὶ τοῖς ἀκούουσι φαίνονται." 22.178a20-23: "ἀλλ' ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀκούοντος ὑπολαμβάνεται δεδωκέναι, ὅτε τὸ τέμνειν ποιεῖν τι καὶ τὸ τετμηκέναι πεποιηκέναι ἔδωκε καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα ὁμοίως λέγεται· τὸ γὰρ λοιπὸν αὐτὸς προστίθησιν ὁ ἀκούων ὡς ὁμοίως λεγόμενον."

5) Mss Salamanca, BU 2350: 197rB; Bruxelles, BR 3540-47: 543v.

Twelfth-century scholars seem to have thought differently about Aristotle's dirty tricks. I shall offer some examples of how Anonymus Cantabrigiensis[6] deals with such context-sensitive argumentation in his very thorough commentary on the *Refutations*. In fact, the Cambridge Anonymous seems to have composed the extant version of his work in Paris somewhere between 1204 and 1210, but this vast commentary is probably just the last version of something he had been working on for a long time. He belongs to the 12th-century tradition of competing schools with each their own characteristic list of *positiones*,[7] and probably considered himself a *nominalis*. The scholars of twelfth-century Paris knew what it was like to be committed to certain theses, they also knew what it was like to debate both within their own schools and with the fans of different teachers in front of a public. To them much of Aristotle's strategic advice was congenial. This is reflected in Anonymus Cantabrigiensis' exegesis of the *Elenchi*, right down to his use of the first person plural when fleshing out Aristotle's advice on the use of dirty tricks. He does not just say "This is what one may do", instead he repeatedly says "We must do" (*debemus facere*) whatever Aristotle counsels, as in the following passage:[8]

> Another precept: Sometimes the respondent is in doubt about some proposition whether it is true or not, and when he is in doubt he is already close to conceding it. Then we must praise him for accepting such a proposition, even if he has not yet accepted it.

Several of Aristotle' stratagems are based on confusing the other disputant so as to make him overlook the traps we are laying for him. One rather ungentlemanly way of doing this is for the questioner to shake the respondent's composure, and thus make him commit argumentational mistakes. The questioner may achieve this by indicating that he does not intend to play by the rules, and

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6) SE15 in the catalogue of *Elenchi* commentaries in Sten Ebbesen, 'Medieval Latin Glosses and Commentaries on Aristotelian Logical Texts of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', in *Glosses and Commentaries on Aristotelian Logical Texts*, ed. Ch.Burnett, Warburg Institute Surveys and Texts 23, (London, 1993), 129-77. The only text-witness is ms Cambridge, St John's College, D.12: 80r-111v. I quote from an edition that I am preparing for publication in the *Scientia Danica* series of the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters.

7) For this feature of 12th-century school life, see Sten Ebbesen, 'What Must one Have an Opinion about?', *Vivarium* 30 (1993), 62-79. Rp. in *Topics in Latin Philosophy from the 12th-14th centuries: Collected Essays of Sten Ebbesen, Volume II* (Aldershot, 2009).

8) Anonymus Cantabrigiensis on *SE* 12.172b17: "*Et ea* Aliud <praeceptum>: Quandoque respondens <dubitat> de aliqua propositione utrum sit vera necne, et quando dubitat iam accedit ad eam concedendam. Tunc debemus eum laudare quia talem propositionem recipit, quamvis e[ti]am nondum receperit."

in general by impudence. This is likely to make the respondent fly into a rage and lose his sound judgment. One Greek commentator reasonably suggests that such bad behaviour could consist in calling the respondent an ignoramus.[9]

Anonymus Cantabrigiensis actually misunderstands the Aristotelian text, but nevertheless makes sense of it. He thinks the idea is that the answerer should impute foul play and impudence to the respondent:[10]

> *The elements of anger*, i.e. that by which we shall provoke his anger are these: (1) *to make it clear that he intends to act*, i.e. debate, *unfairly*, although he himself believes that he is debating fairly, because then he will be more likely to concede something that will be useful to our aim; (2) to show that he *is impudent*, i.e. lacking shame *regarding every* matter put forward, by asking how he is not ashamed to debate that nastily in front of such an audience. [Italicised words are lemmata.]

The anonymous has correctly grasped the idea that a man who has lost his composure is likely to make missteps, and although it is the result of a misunderstanding of the text, his first example is a good one: someone who is accused—in his own opinion: unfairly—of foul play is likely to lose his temper. In his second example the commentator introduces a consideration that Aristotle makes a point of elsewhere, namely that it is important which impression a disputant makes on the audience. By asking 'Aren't you ashamed of such mean behaviour in front of such a distinguished audience?' the questioner both flatters the audience and tries to make the respondent panic for fear that he become unpopular with the listeners.

Another piece of Aristotelian advice is explained as follows:[11]

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9) Commentarium II *ad SE* 15.174a20, ed. Ebbesen, *Commentators and Commentaries*, 2: II.99: "ἀδικεῖν δὲ δόξομεν ὅταν μὴ ὡς δεῖ ἐρωτῶμεν, ἀναισχυντεῖν δὲ ὅταν ἀμαθῆ τι τοιοῦτον λέγωμεν τὸν ἀποκρινόμενον."

10) Anonymus Cantabrigiensis on *SE* 15.174a20: "*Est autem* aliud praeceptum *ira et contentio*, ut sc. faciamus eum iratum contendendo contra eum. Et quare valet hoc? *Quia omnes conturbati minus possunt conservari* circa propria<s> propositiones, i.e. minus possunt observare proprias rationes. *Elementa autem irae* i.e. quibus facilius provocabimus eum ad iram sunt haec: *et facere manifestum eum quod velit iniuste* <*agere*, i.e.> disputare, cum tamen ipse putet se iuste disputare, quia sic facilius concedet aliquid quod erit utile ad propositum; et ostendere eum *esse impudentem* i.e. inverecundum *circa omne* propositum, quaerendo qualiter non pudeat eum prave disputare ante tales audientes."

11) Anonymus Cantabrigiensis on *SE* 15.174a32: "*Aut* Aliud praeceptum est de modo <interrogandi>: Debemus *ex aequo interrogationem facere* i.e. debemus simul contradictorias interrogationes ponere, quia tunc <non> percipiet respondens quam illarum velimus magis nobis concedi, ut 'Putas omnium contrariorum est eadem disciplina vel non?'. Sed est unus modus sophistice

> We must simultaneously put contradictory questions, because then the respondent will not realize which of them we prefer him to grant us. E.g., 'Do you think that all contraries fall under the same branch of knowledge, or that they do not?' But there is one sophistical way of answering that type of question: 'It is true that all contraries fall under the same branch of knowledge or that they do not'.

The "sophistical answer" is a Latin addition to Aristotle, and typical of the 12th century in exploiting the possibility of taking 'Do you think' as having the whole disjunction as its object instead of each disjunct separately.

We are also close to 12th-century school practice when our author comments on Aristotle's first rule for how to confuse the answerer. Aristotle says:[12]

> One means to reach a refutation is length, for it is difficult to survey many things simultaneously. To obtain length one should use the elements presented earlier.[13]

In his comment, the Anonymous offers us a choice between three different types of stretching one's intervention: by producing a long proposition, a long argument or a long series of arguments. A long proposition, he says, may be produced by stuffing it with negations, as in *No man is not a not-animal unless he is not a not-man when he is not a not-risible—Nullus homo non est non animal nisi ipse non sit non homo quando non est non risibile.*[14] It is hard not to be reminded of John of Salisbury's advice about bringing a bag of peas when going to a disputation, and picking out one pea for each negation in a statement, in order to be able to calculate at the end whether it amounted to an

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respondendi ad huiusmodi interrogationes: 'Verum est' sc. 'quod omnium contrariorum sit eadem disciplina vel non'."

12) Arist., *SE* 15.17417-19 "Ἔστι δὴ πρὸς τὸ ἐλέγχειν ἓν μὲν μῆκος· χαλεπὸν γὰρ ἅμα πολλὰ συνορᾶν· εἰς δὲ τὸ μῆκος τοῖς προειρημένοις στοιχείοις χρηστέον."

13) The reference is probably to *Topics* VIII.1, as indicated by Paolo Fait, *Aristotele, Le confutazioni sophistiche* (Roma-Bari, 2007), 73.

14) Anonymus Cantabrigiensis on *SE* 15.174a17: "*Est autem* Incipit ponere praecepta de modo interrogandi, et primum praeceptum est huiusmodi, sc. longitudo. Hoc autem multis modis intelligitur, quia vel de longitudine propositionis, debemus enim longas interrogare propositiones, multas una ponendo negationes, ut 'Nullus homo non est non animal nisi ipse non sit non homo quando non est non risibile'. Vel potest intelligi de longitudine argumentationis, quia debemus facere argumentationem constantem ex sex propositionibus vel ex pluribus. Vel, quod melius est, potest intelligi de longitudine disputationis, ut faciamus quattuor argumentationes aut quinque, quia non poterit tot argumentationibus instare."

affirmation or a negation by seeing whether the number of peas ended up even or odd.[15]

In deciding whether to use a certain stratagem, the Cambridge Anonymous counsels us to distinguish between a friendly and an unfriendly environment. In a certain sort of situation, he says:[16]

> we can use the stratagem of asking many questions and putting a false one among them, because then the answerer is more likely to grant it. But notice that doing so is sometimes reprehensible, sometimes not all that much. If the disputation takes place among comrades—*socii*—it is a bad thing to ask many questions; but if it takes place among spoilers—*dyscoli*—, we can do this because there we need not worry about *how* we win [the debate].

The opposition of *socii* to *dyscoli* owes some inspiration to *Topics* VIII, where *dyscoli* appear on several occasions, and a bad *socius* once (VIII.11.161a37). Aristotle's bad *socius* is a spoiler because he does not take the disputation to be a *joint* project to promote insight and argumentational skills, but for all that he could, perhaps, be a member of the same school as the others. Anonymus Cantabrigiensis' distinction between *socii* and *dyscoli* is very likely to coincide precisely with that between members of one's own and members of other schools.

The competing schools, however, are there in Aristotle's text, too. Although not completely overlooked, this is not much appreciated by modern interpreters. At one point he says:[17]

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15) Iohannes Sarisberiensis, *Metalogicon* I.3, ed. J.B. Hall & K.S.B. Keats-Rohan, Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis 98 (Turnhout, 1991), 16 : "Inconveniens prorsus erat oratio in qua haec verba 'conveniens' et 'inconveniens', 'argumentum' et 'ratio' non perstrepebant, multiplicatis particulis negativis et traiectis per 'esse' et 'non esse', ita ut calculo opus esset quotiens fuerat disputandum. Alioquin vis affirmationis et negationis erat incognita. Nam plerumque vim affirmationis habet geminata negatio, itemque vis negatoria ab impari numero convalescit, siquidem negatio iterata plerumque se ipsam perimit, et contradictioni sicut regulariter proditum est coaequatur. Ut ergo pari loco an impari versetur deprehendi queat, ad disceptationes collectam fabam et pisam deferre qui conueniebatur consilio prudenti consueverat."

16) Anonymus Cantabrigiensis on *SE* 12.172b16: "*Et interrogare* Aliud praeceptum. Primum enim fuit quando non est determinatum propositum. Sed etiam si sit aliquod propositum possumus uti hac cautela ut multas propositiones interrogemus et inter illas aliqua falsa ponatur, quia tunc facilius illam concedet. Sed nota quod istud quandoque est reprehensibile, quandoque non tantum. Si inter socios disputatio et multas interrogemus, vitium est; si autem inter dyscolos, quia ibi non est curandum quocumque modo vincamus, tunc possumus hoc facere, et interrogare multa est venativum horum."

17) Arist., *SE* 12.172b29-31: "Πάλιν πρὸς τὸ παράδοξα λέγειν σκοπεῖν ἐκ τίνος γένους ὁ διαλεγόμενος, εἶτ' ἐπερωτᾶν ὃ τοῖς πολλοῖς οὕτοι λέγουσι παράδοξον· ἔστι γὰρ ἑκάστοις τι τοιοῦτον."

> With a view to [making the answerer] say implausible things, one must look at what group the disputant belongs to, and then ask about something which they claim but which is implausible to ordinary people—each group, of course, has something of the sort.

I have little doubt that the sort of group in case—γένος is Aristotle's word, and *genus* is Boethius' translation—is a philosophical school, and already the Greek commentary tradition had grasped that. One commentator uses adherents of Zeno and his denial of movement as an example,[18] while Michael of Ephesus exemplifies with Stoics and Peripatetics, and more specifically with the strange Peripatetic thesis that the heavens are made out of a fifth element.[19] Via Michael, the interpretation of the *genus* as a philosophical school was introduced in the West. Most modern translators seem to agree on rendering γένος as "school (of philosophers)", but shy back from commenting on the expression. Paolo Fait in his excellent commentary mentions Heracliteans and Protagoreans as groups of the sort Aristotle had in mind, but without providing examples of their implausible theses.[20]

What a difference when we turn to Anonymus Cantabrigiensis![21]

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[18] Anon., *Commentarium II in Arist. SE*, ad 172b29, ed. Ebbesen, *Commentators and Commentaries on Aristotle's Sophistici Elenchi*, 2: 92: "σκοπεῖν ἐκ τίνος γένους ὁ διαλεγόμενος, εἶτα ἐρωτᾶν ὃ τοῖς πολλοῖς οὗτοι λέγουσι παράδοξον Οἷον εἴ τις τῶν ἐκ τοῦ Ζήνωνος, ἐρωτητέον· 'Ἆρ' ἔστι κινεῖσθαι', καὶ δῆλον ὅτι ἀπαρνήσεται τὸ εἶναι κίνησιν ἢ κινεῖσθαι, ὃ δή, τὸ μὴ εἶναι κίνησιν, τοῖς πολλοῖς ἐστι παράδοξον."

[19] See *Alexandri quod fertur in Aristotelis Sophisticos Elenchos Commentarium*, 101.

[20] Fait, *Aristotele, Le confutazioni sophistiche*, 164; his translation, p. 41, is "esaminare quale scuola di pensiero segua l'interlocutore". Louis-André Dorion in his *Aristote, Les réfutations sophistiques* (Paris-Québec, 1995), 152, translates "examiner de quelle école se réclame l'interlocuteur', but does not in his commentary reveal what sort of school he thinks Aristotle meant. W.A. Pickard-Cambridge says "look and see to what school of philosophers the person arguing with you belongs" but adds no note on the passage in his 'Topica and De sophisticis elenchis', in *The Works of Aristotle*, ed. W.D. Ross, volume I, (Oxford, 1928). Similarly Edward Poste, *Aristotle on Fallacies or the Sophistici Elenchi* (London, 1866), 41 translates "considering to what school the respondent belongs" without any comment. Börje Bydén, *Aristoteles, De interpretatione, Om sofistiska vederläggninger* (Stockholm, 2000), 117 is exceptional by preferring the neutral expression 'grupp' ("skall man se efter vilken grupp han tilhör" = "one must look and see to which group he belongs").

[21] Anonymus Cantabrigiensis on *SE* 2.172b29: "*Rursum* Ponit locum proprium. †Ideo primo† considerandum est de quo genere est ille qui disputat. Genera autem disputantium secundum principales positiones cognoscuntur, ut si sint de eorum genere qui dicunt quod quicquid semel est verum semper est verum, vel eorum qui dicunt quod nihil sequitur ex falso, vel quod ex impossibili sequitur quidlibet. Et tunc considerandum est, quod secundum alios in eius opinione si[n]t improbabilius, quia circa illud facilius ducetur ad inopinabile. Et hoc est *Rursum* etc. <12.172b31> *Est* Diceret aliquis forte in eius opinione nihil esse inopinabile, ideo dicit *Est enim*

> The various groups of disputants are characterized by their capital theses. For instance, they may belong to the group of those who claim that whatever is true at one time is true forever, or to the group of those who say that nothing follows from a falsehood or that from the impossible anything follows. And then one must take into account that what according to others is the most implausible in his dogma, this is the means by which he is most easily forced into saying something implausible. […] Someone might perhaps say that his dogma contains nothing implausible, and that is why Aristotle says *Each* dogma, *of course, has something of the sort*, i.e. something that is implausible to others. For example, in our dogma there is the implausible claim that it would never be true that you are in Paradise, in the dogma of others the implausible feature that they cannot produce necessary arguments against us by using 'Whatever is true at one time is true forever' as a premiss, because they say that nothing follows from a falsehood.

The Anonymous has effortlessly managed to make the Aristotelian piece of advice immediately relevant to his own age—at the same time, I submit, shedding real light on what sort of thing Aristotle was thinking of. I do not believe Aristotle was thinking of long-dead Heracliteans, Protagoreans or Eleatics. I believe he had contemporaries in mind, though, of course, some of those might still cherish some variant of an old thesis. Anonymus Cantabrigiensis lived or had lived in an environment in which Aristotle's words made immediate sense. He exemplifies with a controversial *positio* held by his own school, viz. *Quicquid semel est verum semper est verum*, and the problem an adherent of the rival school of *Meludinenses* has in attacking it because he cannot use it to derive any absurdity from it since he holds that it is false and also, as one of *his* school's theses, that nothing follows from a falsehood.[22]

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in singulis opinionibus *aliquid tale* i.e. inopinabile aliis, quemadmodum in nostra opinione inopinabile quod numquam esset verum te esse in Paradiso, in aliorum opinione inopinabile est quod non possunt nobis facere necessaria argumenta procedendo ex hac 'Quod semel est verum semper est verum', quia dicunt quod ex falso nihil sequitur."

Cf. Anonymus Parisiensis, *Compendium SE*, in S. Ebbesen, 'Anonymi Parisiensis Compendium Sophisticorum Elenchorum. The Uppsala Version', *Cahiers de l'Institut du Moyen-âge Grec et Latin* 66 (1996), 253-312, at pp. 306-07: "Proprius vero modus ducendi ad inopinabile est considerare ex quo genere sit qui disputat, scilicet an sit grammaticus an dialecticus et sic in aliis, vel cuius opinionem profiteatur. In qualibet enim opinione aliquid est quod aliarum professoribus inopinabile videtur, veluti opinio Vocalium est quod nulla res crescit et quod quilibet homo est id in quo nulla scientia est et nullus intellectus et nulla ratio. Qui vero magistri Adae opinionem tenent asserunt quod ad Socratem esse asinum sequitur Socratem esse regem." In the same vein, Robertus Grosseteste (?), *Comm. SE*, ms Oxford, Merton College, 280: 20rB: "Primum tale: considerandum est de quo genere est qui respondet, utrum sc. de genere realium vel nominalium, et ita de aliis".

22) *Quicquid semel etc.* is repeatedly attested as a thesis of the *Nominales*. See, e.g., texts 46, 50b and 51 in Iwakuma Yukio and Sten Ebbesen, 'Logico-theological Schools from the Second Half

In a difficult passage, *SE* 15.174b12-18, Aristotle gives advice to the questioner in a situation in which the answerer must defend an adoxic thesis. To reach the contradictory proposition, which will be endoxic, the questioner must obtain a couple of endoxic premisses from the answerer. Instead of putting his questions in the form 'Is *p* the case?' he is advised to ask 'Do you believe that *p* is the case?'. If the answerer says 'Yes', he hands the questioner the premisses he needs, and the thesis will be refuted. If he says 'No, I do not believe so', he will admit belief in an adoxic proposition. If he tries to slip between the horns of the dilemma by saying 'No, though I actually believe that it *is* the case', this will be virtually equivalent to granting the proposition needed to refute the thesis. Why so? Didn't he say 'No'? Yes, but in the ears of the audience that No will count as a Yes. And it is the same public's reaction that makes it a bad move to openly claim disbelief in an endoxic proposition, as he would if he said 'No, I don't believe so.'

The above interpretation of the passage is based on Paolo Fait's scholium on it.[23] Anonymus Cantabrigiensis would beg to differ. He understands the advice given to be the following: The questioner wants to reach an implausible conclusion, which will be a refutation of the respondent's thesis. To do so he must ask the respondent to grant some more plausible proposition through which he may reach the desired conclusion.

Our Anonymous first illustrates the procedure by means of an example drawn from Michael of Ephesus' commentary.[24] Your desired conclusion is that it is a good thing to kill one's relatives. So you ask 'Don't you think king

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of the Twelfth Century: A List of Sources', *Vivarium* 30 (1992), 173-210. *Nihil sequitur ex falso* is thesis 11 in Anon., *Secta Meludina*; see the extract in L. M. de Rijk, *Logica Modernorum II.1* (Assen 1967), 283, and is also elsewhere attested at being a *positio* of the Melun school.

23) Fait, *Aristotele, Le confutazioni sophistiche*, 174.

24) Anonymus Cantabrigiensis on *SE* 15.174b12: "*Sophisticum*. Aliam cautelam ponit. Quandoque proponimus probare aliquod improbabile ad quod probandum non erunt multae rationes. Tunc considerandum est quod probabilius adiunctum est illi improbabili, et debemus illud interrogare. Si respondens illud concedat, ducetur ad redargutionem; si non concedat ducetur ad inopinabile, quia illa videretur esse probabilis, ut, sicut dicit Alexander, si velimus probare hanc propositionem 'Bonum est parentes interficere', debemus hanc interrogare 'Putas, quod videtur, Archelaus fuerit felix?', et erit sic interroganda 'Utrum tibi videtur?' quia sic non videbitur quaerere causâ argumentandi, sed magis ut sciamus quid super hoc sentiat respondens, et ideo facilius concedetur. Archelaus per interfectionem parentum est adeptus regnum. Quaeretur ergo utrum fu<er>it felix, quod inde videbitur quia rex fuit. Quod si concedatur, sic procedam: 'Sed per interfectionem parentum adeptus est regnum, ergo bonum est interficere parentes, nam cuius finis bonus, quoque ipsum bonum'. Cf. *Alexandri quod fertur in Aristotelis Sophisticos Elenchos Commentarium*, 114-15.

Archelaus was a happy man?' Well, it takes some guts to say 'No' in view of the fact that he won the crown of Macedon (reigned 413-399 BC). If, however, the answerer says 'Yes', the next premiss will be 'But he became king by murdering his relatives' (which Archelaus actually did, according to Plato, *Gorgias* 471a-d), from which it is easy to reach the conclusion that it is a good thing to murder one's relatives—all you need are some trivial premisses about the relation between happiness and goodness.

After the Greek example, our Anonymous continues:

> To use a more familiar example: if we want to prove that nothing grows, which is very implausible, one should ask something more plausible, namely whether what is left of Socrates above the knees is a part of Socrates. When that is conceded, it will be easy to prove that nothing grows, for after the loss of a leg the very same that now is a part of Socrates will be Socrates, and from this it is easy to obtain that nothing grows.[25]

'Nothing grows', it should be remembered, was a famous paradoxic tenet of the school of *Nominales*.[26]

The advice given in this passage does not amount to a very dirty trick, it is just introducing by the back door the rule that a thing is identical with the sum total of its parts, a rule that the respondent might not have accepted if directly confronted with it. But once again the audience plays a role, for according to the anonymous the respondent is caught in a dilemma: If he concedes the plausible proposition, his opponent can conclude the implausible one, and so he is refuted. If he denies the plausible proposition he has immediately lost the game in the eyes of the audience, because, as the answerer will point out, in so doing he is affirming an implausibility.

School tenets also turn up in our commentator's exegesis of the following passage:[27]

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25) Anonymus Cantabrigiensis on *SE* 15.174b12: "Possumus autem familiarius exemplum inducere, ut si velimus probare quod nihil crescit, quod valde improbabile est, interrogandum erit hoc probabilius, sc. utrum illud reliquum Socratis quod est a genibus supra sit pars Socratis, quo concesso facile probabitur quod nihil crescit, quia ablato pede, illud idem erit Socrates quod modo est pars Socratis, et ex hoc facile habebitur quod nihil crescit."

26) See texts 26, 48c and 53 in Iwakuma and Ebbesen, 'Logico-theological Schools'. For a discussion of the thesis, see Christopher J. Martin, 'The Logic of Growth: Twelfth-Century Nominalists and the Development of Theories of the Incarnation', *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 7 (1998), 1-15.

27) Arist., *SE* 15.174b19-23: "Ἔτι καθάπερ καὶ ἐν τοῖς ῥητορικοῖς, καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἐλεγκτικοῖς ὁμοίως τὰ ἐναντιώματα θεωρητέον ἢ πρὸς τὰ ὑφ' ἑαυτοῦ λεγόμενα ἢ πρὸς οὓς ὁμολογεῖ καλῶς λέγειν ἢ πράττειν, ἔτι πρὸς τοὺς δοκοῦντας τοιούτους ἢ πρὸς τοὺς ὁμοίους, ἢ πρὸς τοὺς

> Moreover, just as in rhetoric, so also in elenchic, one should examine the discrepancies of [the answerer's statements] with other statements of his own, or with persons whom he admits to say or do aright, or who seem to be such persons, or with people who are similar [to himself], or with most or all people.

This is interpreted as follows:[28]

> One more precept. Just as it is necessary for an orator to examine whether his adversary towards the end of his plea says anything that is discrepant with previous statements of his, so in disputations one must consider whether the respondent says anything that is discrepant with his previous statements, or whether he says anything that is discrepant with the doctrine of his master, in which case one should show that he does not defend his master's doctrine properly. Moreover, one should examine whether he says anything that is discrepant with those who hold a similar thesis. For example, if someone says that an argument consists of a proposition, a conclusion and a premiss, one should examine whether what he says is discrepant with those who say that it is the *dictum* of the proposition that is the argument, because the latter position has to be defended in the same way as the former.

Michael of Ephesus had thought that the persons the respondent might agree with might be revered philosophers such as Zeno.[29] Once again, the Western commentator sees the Aristotelian text's relevance to his own situation with the competing schools, the pupils of which had a sacred duty to defend each their own master's theses.[30] And once again, the audience plays a role for the

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πλείστους ἢ πρὸς πάντας." My translation is a modified version of that of Pickard-Cambridge in 'Topica and De sophisticis elenchis'.

28) Anonymus Cantabrigiensis on *SE* 15.174b19: "Amplius Aliud praeceptum: Sicut necessarium est considerare oratori considerare utrum adversarius in fine causae dicat aliquid quod sit contrarium alicui illorum quae prius dixit, similiter in disputationibus considerandum est utrum respondens dicat aliquid quod sit contrarium ei quod prius dixit, vel utrum dicat aliquid quod sit contrarium sententiae magistri sui, et tunc ostendendum est quod non bene tenet sententiam magistri sui. Considerandum est etiam si dicat contrarium illis qui similem sustinent positionem, ut si dicat quis propositionem–conclusionem–praemissam esse argumentum, considerandum est utrum dicat contrarium eis qui dicunt quod dictum propositionis est argumentum, quia eodem modo debet sustineri haec positio et illa." By 'proposition, conclusion and premiss' the author presumably means "major premiss, conclusion, minor premiss". The reference to holders of the thesis that an *argumentum* is a *dictum* most likely concerns the school of Melun. Thesis 22 in *Secta Meludina* (De Rijk, *Logica Modernorum II.1*, 284) is: "Verum praemissum in argumentatione efficax illatae conclusionis est argumentum." The same thesis is found in Anon., *Ars Meliduna*, ms Oxford, Bodleian, Digby 174: 239rA (I owe thanks to Yukio Iwakuma, who has let me have a copy of his transcription).

29) See *Alexandri quod fertur in Aristotelis Sophisticos Elenchos Commentarium*, 115.

30) Cf. Anon., *Secta Meludina*, ms London, BL, Royal 2.D.30: 95rA: "<D>ialecticam artem esse primo et principaliter qualiter disserendum instituentem et ad id expediendum institutam non

argumentational strategy: If you can show that the answerer fails to defend his master, he has lost the battle in the eyes of the spectators.

The school theses occur once more in a longish digression about objections, *instantiae*. Our author expressly acknowledges that what he says is not an explication of the Aristotelian text, but a supplement to it. The *instantia* digression was published in 1983,[31] and I shall not in this place go into details, but just point to a distinction between *instantiae secundum veritatem* and *instantiae secundum opinionem*. The former are such as will work against just any opponent, the latter such as only function with an opponent of a particular philosophical creed. If, for instance, a *Meludinensis* argues[32] "If that which runs moves, something moves; so if nothing moves that which runs does not move either", you can use the fact that as a *Meludinensis* he is committed to the thesis that nothing follows from a falsehood, and object that since it is false that nothing moves, he cannot hold that 'nothing moves' entails 'that which runs does not move either'.

Unsurprisingly, Anonymus Cantabrigiensis sometimes misunderstands the text he is commenting on, but he has a good overall grasp of what Aristotle's analysis of shady argumentation is all about. A disputant should learn context-independent and objective ways of demasking pseudo-refutations. But in an actual disputation he should know how to make his own argumentation context-sensitive, taking into account first the venue: is this a friendly duel between *socii* or is it a clash between representatives of competing schools. Next such features as his antagonist's commitments and mental weaknesses. And last, but not least, the expectations of the audience.

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ignorantibus Peripateticae disciplinae et Meludinae professionis quaedam elementa propono. Quorum probabilitate multiplici confirmata ratione, contrarium his, ut probabilius accidet, rationabilis inpugnabit obviatio, multis quidem quae ad horum improbationem inducuntur rationibus congrua similium inductione repulsis. Cum enim dialectica disquisitio probabilitatis sit gratia ratiocinando sermocinatio circa positionem aggredientis terminare propositum, ad eius probabilitatem prima sit rationis institutio, ut non solum quid sed qualiter id et cuius gratia dicatur sit manifestum. Deinde vero si quid positioni dicatur contrarium, sustinentis positionem est id dissuadere, insistendo quidem resistenti positionis contrarium contrarii persuadere conantis." The text seems to be somewhat corrupt in the last two periods, though it is difficult to be sure of this due to the pretentious style.

31) Sten Ebbesen & Yukio Iwakuma, 'Instantiae and 12th-century "Schools" ', *Cahiers de l'Institut du Moyen-Âge Grec et Latin* 44 (1983), 81-85, at pp. 82-85.

32) Anonymus Cantabrigiensis f. 110vA: "si aliquis Melidunensis utatur tali argumentatione 'Si id quod currit movetur, aliquid movetur; ergo si nihil movetur nec id quod currit movetur', poterit dari instantia in universali, quoniam ex falso nihil sequitur, et falsum est nihil moveri."

As one of my Copenhagen colleagues recently suggested to me, a modern interpreter of the *Sophistical Refutations* might profitably compare the situation of Aristotelian dialecticians with that of participants in a TV debate. Ostensibly they are just arguing with each other, and they usually want to make it appear that their argumentation is entirely rational—but the real purpose of their dialogue is to impress the viewers.

3. Is Anonymus Cantabrigiensis a Good Guide to Aristotle?

I have claimed above that it makes sense to think that Aristotle was operating in an environment similar to that of 12th-century Paris, one in which public disputations between representatives of different philosophical sects was an important part of scholarly life.

Now, it must be admitted that the evidence for this is fairly week, as is the evidence for just about anything else we may believe about the environment in which Aristotle worked. Dialectical disputations πείρας καὶ σκέψεως χάριν "for the sake of testing and checking" (*Top*. 8.5.159a33), were probably carried out between members of the Academy in Aristotle's youth,[33] and later between members of his Lyceum in his mature age. Such school-internal disputations between *socii* who shared a common goal of better understanding on the basis of some common presuppositions may sometimes have been performed without a public, even an internal one, we cannot tell from Aristotle's text. But whenever Aristotle speaks of competitive (ἀγωνιστικοί) or sophistical (σοφιστικοί) disputations (λόγοι), he clearly presupposes an audience on which the disputants can make an impression, as he does in *Topics* VIII:[34]

> In a competitive disputation the questioner should by all means appear to be achieving an effect and the answerer appear not to suffer anything. But in dialectical encounters, in which the disputants do not argue for the sake of competing but for the sake of testing and

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[33] As proposed by E. Hambruch in his classical article about the historical background of the *Topics*, 'Logiche Regeln der Platonischen Schule in der Aristotelischen Topik', *Wissenschaftliche Beilage zum Jahresbericht des Askanischen Gymnasiums zu Berlin* (Berlin, 1904), and generally accepted by later scholarship, though questioned by some, e.g. Evans, *Aristotle's Concept of Dialectics*.

[34] Arist., *Top*. VIII.5.159a30-36: "Τῶν δ' ἀγωνιζομένων τὸν μὲν ἐρωτῶντα φαίνεσθαί τι δεῖ ποιεῖν πάντως, τὸν δ' ἀποκρινόμενον μηδὲν φαίνεσθαι πάσχειν· ἐν δὲ ταῖς διαλεκτικαῖς συνόδοις τοῖς μὴ ἀγῶνος χάριν ἀλλὰ πείρας καὶ σκέψεως τοὺς λόγους ποιουμένοις οὐ διήρθρωταί πω τίνος δεῖ στοχάζεσθαι τὸν ἀποκρινόμενον καὶ ποῖα διδόναι καὶ ποῖα μή, πρὸς τὸ καλῶς ἢ μὴ καλῶς φυλάττειν τὴν θέσιν."

> checking, there are so far no guidelines for what the anwerer should aim at or what sort of thing he should or should not grant in order to deliver either a good or a bad defense of the thesis.

We have already seen that the presence of an audience at some debates is directly attested by at least three passages in the *Sophistical Refutations* (see note 4 in section 1). Moreover, Aristotle's descriptions in *SE* chapter 1 of sophistry as apparent expertise (φαινομένη σοφία) displayed in apparent deductions and refutations (φαινόμενοι συλλογισμοί, φαινόμενοι ἔλεγχοι), as well as the no less than 72 occurences of forms of φαίνεσθαι in the work, only make sense if there is someone to whom the sophistical arguments may appear to be conclusive, and that can hardly be their victims. An audience must be meant.

How did the disputants get a public? In all probability, by staging their disputations in one of the Athenian *gymnasia*—the Academy, the Lyceum or the Cynosargus—that were frequented by the Athenian upper class and a motley of intellectuals, philosophers among them.

Having established the existence of public disputations in which the disputants had for a main goal to be judged victorious by the audience, we must ask whether there was a culture of school allegiance, so that it is probable that such encounters would tend to pit representatives of different schools against each other.

One very strong piece of evidence is Aristotle's use of the first person plural in the following passage from the *Metaphysics* (I.9.991b3): ἐν δὲ τῷ Φαίδωνι οὕτω λέγομεν, ὡς καὶ τοῦ εἶναι καὶ τοῦ γίγνεσθαι αἴτια τὰ εἴδη ἐστίν "In the *Phaedo* we say that the forms are causes both of being and of coming to be." All editions and virtually all mss of the *Metaphysics* read λέγεται instead of λέγομεν, but as Werner Jaeger pointed out in a posthumously published article and Oliver Primavesi will convincingly show in a forthcoming publication,[35] the latter reading, attested by Alexander of Aphrodisias and Asclepius, is the true one. It is an old observation that in the *Metaphysics* Aristotle sometimes uses the first person plural to present himself as an Academic or at least a Platonist of sorts, and this is surely what he also does in this case. He does not, of course, claim to be a co-author of a famous work by Plato. 'What we say in the

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[35] Werner Jaeger, 'We say in the Phaedo', in *Harry Austryn Wolfson Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed. S. Lieberman, Sh. Spiegel, L. Strauss, and A. Hyman (Jerusalem,1965), English Section, 1: 407-421. Oliver Primavesi will present his arguments in the introduction to an edition of *Metaphysics* I (A) due to appear at OUP in the proceedings of the 18th Symposium Aristotelicum, ed. by Carlos Steel.

Phaedo' must mean "What we say when reading and discussing the *Phaedo*." In other words: we have a scholastic sort of culture in which the school founder's writings have the role of an authoritative basis for further investigation.

Another piece of evidence is Aristotle's reference to οἱ Μεγαρικοί in *Metaphysics* IX.3.1046b 29, which proves that the school-designation is not a later invention. Also, notice that οἱ Μεγαρικοί does not mean "the Megarians", as it is often translated (Megarians are Μεγαρεῖς in Greek), but "those of the Megarian type", i.e. intellectually descended from Euclid of Megara, irrespective of their citizenship or abode. As a name of a philosophical sect it is strictly parallel to the medieval *Meludinenses*, which was applied to the intellectual heirs of Robert of Melun.

There is every reason to believe that members of the Megaric school were active in Athens in Aristotle's days. Eubulides of Miletus was probably a direct pupil of the school founder Euclid, and a fragment of a comedy that ridicules "the eristic Eubulides" for his grandiloquent nonsense and compares it with Demosthenes' makes it certain that he was present in Athens at about the same time as Aristotle. Moreover, there is reliable evidence that he was hostile to Aristotle. As Diogenes Laertius puts it, he "was engaged in quarrels with Aristotle and has left much slander against him"[36] The sources characterize him as ἐριστικός and διαλεκτικός, and he was obviously most famous for his use and/or investigation of sophisms.[37] The Eubulides–Aristotle feud apparently carried over into the next generation of philosophers. Eubulides' pupil Alexinus is also claimed to have slandered Aristotle,[38] while Aristotle's pupil Phaenias seems to have written an attack on Diodorus Cronus, whom ancient testimony also places among the intellectual offspring of Euclid and Eubulides.[39]

Eubulides and his offspring were noted for their dialectical activities, being also known to posterity as "the eristics" or "the dialecticians",[40] so they were a

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36) Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* 2.109: "ὁ δ' Εὐβουλίδης καὶ πρὸς Ἀριστοτέλην διεφέρετο, καὶ πολλὰ αὐτὸν διαβέβληκε." Further sources in Klaus Döring, *Die Megariker*, Studien zur antiken Philosopie 2 (Amsterdam, 1972), 18-19 (fragments 59-62). According to Aristocles, cited by Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 15.2.4-5 (Döring, fragments 60 and 90), both Eubulides and his pupil Alexinus, equally of sophismatic fame, had slandered Aristotle.

37) See the sources in Döring, *Die Megariker*, 16-19.

38) Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 15.2.4 = Döring, *Die Megariker*, frgm. 90.

39) See *Die Megariker*, 28-44 and Nicholas Denyer, 'Neglected Evidence for Diodorus Cronus', *Classical Quarterly* 52 (2002), 597-600.

40) Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* 2.106. It is not important for my argument whether the Dialecticians were a different school from the Megarics, as has been argued by Sedley, as long

group with whom Aristotle's pupils could engage in a dialectic joust. Aristotle may also have considered them sophists.

Interestingly, Megarics/Eristics/Dialecticians are also known to have continued Zeno's line of arguments against the possibility of movement,[41] and encounters with Megarics may help explain Aristotle's repeated references to "Zeno's argument" in discussions of disputational manœuvres.[42] Even in the *Physics*, where Zeno's arguments are referred to several times without any reference to a dialectical context, such a context *is* indicated in one case:[43]

> This is also the way to answer those who ask Zeno's argument and demand that […], or, as others ask the same argument, demanding that […]

The formulation strongly suggests that Aristotle's audience should imagine themselves in the role of an answerer in a disputation in which the questioner tries to field Zeno's argument against them. And, indeed, in *Topics* VIII.8.160b7-10 they are advised to practice for such a situation by positing the opposite of Zeno's claim as the thesis to defend in a friendly disputation, i.e. by undertaking to defend the thesis that movement is possible, which is sure to make the questioner resort to Zenonian argumentation.

I also tend to think that training for debates with other schools lies behind this rule in *Topics* VIII:[44]

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as it is recognized that they were descended from Eubulides. For an introduction to the question, see Suzanne Bobzien, 'Dialectical School' (2004) in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, at http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dialectical-school/, accessed November 29, 2010. Also David Sedley, 'Diodorus Cronus' (2009) in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, at http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/diodorus-cronus/, accessed December 1, 2010. Sedley tries to keep a distance between Diodorus and the Megarics by noting that "no evidence that we possess associates him in any way with the town of Megara", but this rests on the surely wrong supposition that one must have been to Megara to be taught by a Megaric.

41) Best attested for Diodorus Cronus, who was probably too late for Aristotle to have met him. See Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos* 10.85-90, *Pyrrhoneae Hypotyposes* 2.245. But Eleatic leanings may have been a characteristic already of the school's founder, Euclid (Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* 2.106).

42) Arist., *APr.* II.17.65b18; *Top.* VIII.8.160b8; *SE* 11.172a9, 24.179b20, (33.182b26 is probably irrelevant).

43) Arist., *Ph.* VIII.8.263a4-7: "τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ τρόπον ἀπαντητέον καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ἐρωτῶντας τὸν Ζήνωνος λόγον καὶ ἀξιοῦντας […] ἢ ὡς τὸν αὐτὸν τοῦτον λόγον τινὲς ἄλλως ἐρωτῶσιν, ἀξιοῦντες […]." Ross excised καὶ ἀξιοῦντας, perhaps unnecessarily, but anyway, its presence or absence is of no consequence for my argumentation.

44) Arist., *Top.* VIII.5.159b27-33: "Ἂν δ' ἑτέρου δόξαν διαφυλάττῃ ὁ ἀποκρινόμενος, δῆλον ὅτι πρὸς τὴν ἐκείνου διάνοιαν ἀποβλέποντα θετέον ἕκαστα καὶ ἀρνητέον. Διὸ καὶ οἱ κομίζοντες

> If the answerer is defending someone else's opinion, he clearly must keep that person's line of thought in mind and posit or deny each claim accordingly. Thus those who introduce opinions that are not their own—e.g., that good and bad are the same, as Heraclitus says—do not concede that opposites cannot apply to the same thing, not because they think so, but because this is what one must say to follow Heraclitus.

In both of the two last quotations, the thesis is explicitly taken from the history of philosophy, and it could be that only a general training was intended in how to argue with other philosophers, dead or alive, by practicing the art of seeing a problem with somebody else's eyes. This would seem to be in accordance with the advice in *Topics* I.14.105b12-18 to make a systematically arranged collection of propositions derived from written works and make doxographical notes, e.g. that Empedocles held that there are four elements of bodies. All this could have the noble purpose of training one in not misrepresenting somebody else's views. But a confrontation with *Sophistical Refutations* 12.172b29-31 discussed in section 2, suggests that a more sinister motive may also have played a role: it is good to learn how to think like one's opponent, because then one can see what implausible claims he will feel forced to defend.

The idea of seeing a connection between the *Sophistical Refutations* and the Megarics is not new. Louis-André Dorion has argued at lengths for the thesis that the 'sophists' and 'eristics' of the *SE* are none other than the Megarics, even though the work is not only an attack on their sophisms but also a broader study of paralogisms.[45] But this is not exactly the view I want to defend here. Rather, my point is that a main purpose of the treatise is to arm Aristotle's listeners for public debates with adherents of other schools, and that we have at least good evidence for *one* competing school with whose adherents his pupils could clash in debates. That he does not have just one other school in mind is borne out by the advice to consider which group one's opponent belongs to and which adoxic tenets he is consequently obliged to defend. Which other schools he may have had in mind is anyone's guess, but former fellow-Platonists and Isocrates' brood are just two among several possibilities.

ἀλλοτρίας δόξας, οἷον ἀγαθὸν καὶ κακὸν εἶναι ταὐτόν, καθάπερ Ἡράκλειτός φησιν, οὐ διδόασι μὴ παρεῖναι ἅμα τῷ αὐτῷ τἀναντία, οὐχ ὡς οὐ δοκοῦν αὐτοῖς τοῦτο, ἀλλ' ὅτι καθ' Ἡράκλειτον οὕτω λεκτέον."

[45] Dorion, *Aristote, Les réfutations sophistiques*, 37-58. Dorion also refers to earlier scholars who have held similar views.

The nature of our sources do not permit very strong conclusions about whether representatives of different schools in Aristotle's Athens had a habit of doing disputational battles with each other, and whether one of Aristotle's goals in carrying through his analyses of fair and unfair disputation was to prepare his troops for such battles, but I do think there are good reasons to take this possibility seriously. The old puzzle how Aristotle could morally defend to teach how to use dirty tricks in a disputation is not all that puzzling if the ἀγῶνες in which "agonistic argumentation" took place were inter-school battles in front of a public. Representatives of competing schools will always be under suspicion of arguing unfairly ("sophistically"), and you cannot afford to let them get away with it in the eyes of the public.

Of course, there were important differences between Aristotle's Athens and 12th-century Paris. Among them the fact that in Paris all masters seem to have been paid by their students, while Aristotle makes a point of distinguishing honest people (like himself, I suppose) from sophists (Eubulides among them, perhaps), one of whose grave defects is that they want to make money by teaching (*SE* 1.165a21). Still, modern interpreters of Aristotle could do worse than taking their cue from Anonymus Cantabrigiensis.

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